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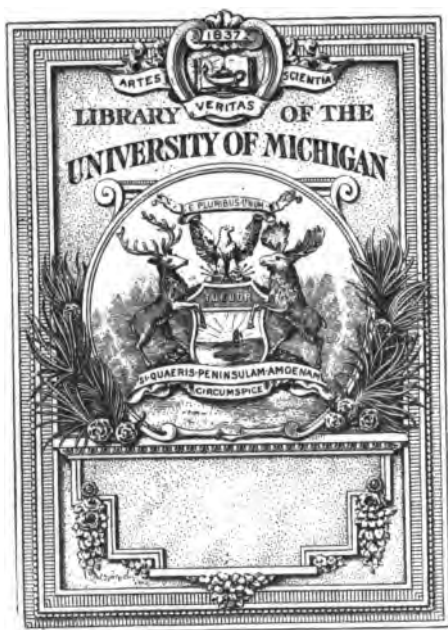
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OPHIEL



OPHEL

BY
TALLI J. BOUKNIGHT



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OPHIEL

OPHIEL

I

"Black robed, and standing tall in solemn majesty
Before an altar high, where flowers pure and white
Entwined with palms that bend in adoration sweet,
Amid a priestly throng of soldiers of the King
Most high and beautiful,— forever thou a priest
According to the order of Melchisedec,
Whom mighty God exalts above thy fellow man,
His woe in time to share, His sorrow dark as night.
Now consecrated to His sacred heart that beats
In gratitude and love for thy devotion deep,
On thee His mantle rests, His armor on thee bound.
Go forth to battle with the Enemy of man,
Who, seeking to devour, assails the innocent.
Thy hand, if faint at times, shall gain the victory;
For thee the Prince of Heaven in glory will defend
And guard thee in the battle and the time of death."

As sweetest solemn music in the air at morn,
As clear as silvery bell, these words descending came
Where at a golden altar of the holy church
Sebastian raptly stood in contemplative love.
Upon his youthful form, serenely beautiful
And undefiled soul, the ceremonies pure
Of holy ordination had but lately fallen
In splendid solemn pomp and papal dignity.

OPHIEL

Sweet consolation, bringing to a trembling heart,
As angelus bells afar at day's dark ending peal,
The low seraphic music of Saint Michael's voice
Was heard diminishing in cadences afar,
As o'er the hills the bugle notes of shepherd boy
Grow fainter in the sunset glow. Sebastian knelt
And offered up anew his heart to God in Heaven.

Although the day was one containing all the joy
Of brightest new-born Spring and many blooming
flowers,

At evening came, in sudden wintry manner, swift
In dreadful melancholy, chilling winds that blew
The glowing flames of many tapers. Wildly leaped
Sebastian's heart, o'er which a vague foreboding crept
Of future ill and martyrdom to undergo.

As low before a golden crucifix he knelt,
Unseen by him a black and wildly wind blown form
Of evil entered o'er a high arched window near
And hovered low in dreadful darkness half obscured.
As full grown youth in red barbaric dress arrayed,
His sensuous form adorned with dark terrific wings,
His face that once was beautiful, in torture wrung,
He reached long, stained arms in mocking gesture
wild

Toward the earthly one who knelt in holy fear
Where pure white lilies bloomed upon an altar high.

Below on Hell's dark throne that morn had Satan
raved,

By man defeated, by his loathsome subjects scorned.
For years he'd striven for Sebastian's snowy soul,
But now it seemed in vain was all his evil art.
In dreadful frenzy had he summoned from afar
Dark Ophiel, the tried and trusty fallen one,

OPHIEL

Who many a soul had ruined of mortal innocent.
By demon oath he was commissioned secretly
To Hades' fiery depths to lure the stainless soul
Of him new consecrated to the Sacred Heart.
At Satan's bidding swiftly had the dark one flown
From out the frightful gate of Hell to wailing earth,
Upraising in his hand a crimson poisoned dart,
Anticipating soon to degradation low
With sinuous arms to drag his victim's snowy soul.

But now he paused in fear of God's adoréd One,
And, folding sable wing and flowing mantle close,
Astonished gazed upon the silent worshipper,
The rapt expression of whose face entrancéd him.
Star-sweet against the gloom of shadows deepening,
It seemed above temptation, pure and angelic.
How like the face of one, it seemed to Ophiel,
Who ages long ago had smiled in Paradise
And decked him with a crown of never fading
flowers,

Who played with him, a child in sweet companionship,
By silvery running stream where grew the tree of
life:

But swift, in frenzied pain, his evil nature rose
In cruel deep desire; but all in vain he strove
From demon tortured mind and heart soon to efface
The memory of that day in holy Paradise
That, after countless years of slumber, now awoke
And shone as smouldering coal in flameless brazier
Blown softly by magnolia perfumed winds of Spring.

II

The first far roseate hues of early Autumn dawn
Had scarce begun to tint the silent star-dimmed East
When Indian chieftain, on a sleepless bed of pain,
Arose and pulled aside the curtains dark that hung
Within the doorway of his wigwam. Misty, faint,
Below him dimly lay a lily-bordered lake,
Extending far to bank where eastern line of trees
Resembled castles of a land beyond the dawn;
And near a mighty pine rose tall and solemnly,
As column standing lone of some mysterious ruin.
Its green and murmuring branches seemed to touch
the sky.

Deserted, ancient, dark and awe-inspiring lay
On either hand a dim and gloomy forest way,
O'erhung with trailing vine and sombre Spanish moss;
And nearer, in a grove of stately solemn oaks
The little wigwams of an Indian village stood
Serenely beautiful and quietly prosperous.

By age and many fevers wasted, wan and tired,
Revealing scars of battles fought and bravely won,
The still, unfolding beauty Miccanope watched
Of light which came through hours weary, long de-
sired.

The misty east now seemed afire with dusky red
That gleamed within the dreamy waters of the lake
As fire of Tophet kindled in dread realms below,
Then slowly changed to gold that lit the western sky,
Victorious proclaiming advent of the morn.
In languor moved a gentle lily-scented breeze

OPHIEL

That scarce perceptibly transformed the golden lake
To misty changing hues unknown and beautiful.
Afar from shore of pines, whose gloomy silhouettes
Rose darkly on the east's increasing radiance,
Entrancing came the notes of huntsman's solemn
 horn
That smote in pleasure wild the chieftain's listening
 ear.

But at another sound, less audible and near—
By Miccanope turned a waiting, eager ear,
As from the curtained portal of adjacent tent
There swiftly came a maiden young and beautiful.
In strange barbaric robe of white and gold adorned,
The chaste and many folds extending down to earth,
Where sandaled foot was seen upon the fallen
 leaves,—
She seemed an Indian flower blooming in the morn,
Whose golden loveliness would fade with evening
 tide,
Unplucked by mortal hand and chaste as morning
 star,
To waste no more its sweet and charming innocence
Upon the rude and inappreciative earth.
Her eyes were as the purple violets that bloom
Along the forest way in fragrance of the dawn,
And gleam with hope imperaled by early morning
 dew.
Her modest steps were swift and graceful as she
 came,
And in her voice the music of the wilderness,
Awaking new from slumbers of the lonely night.

“O father, thou hast passed the long and dreary
 night,—

OPHIEL

Behold in yonder radiant east its glorious end.
So mayest thou hope when dark and fleeting life is
o'er

To pass into such glory from this wilderness
And greet with joy in golden gleaming hunting
ground

My mother and thy dearest kindred gone before."
As gentle Hope, she paused beside the warrior,
Who, broken down with years, in trembling tones
replied:

" My Tuscawilla, little one, more beautiful
Than thy mother was; fairest princess on the earth,
My heart is soaring like an eagle's to that land,
But scarred and red my hands with blood of warriors
slain,

And sin, regretted now, as heavy burden down
Bears grievously upon my faint and weary soul
And strives to press me down where yonder scarlet
fires

Are burning darkly in the bottom of the lake.

" My lovely daughter now, whose heart is pure and
white

As yonder lily opening in the morning light,
O lift for me thy tender, supplicating voice
Unto the Mighty One whose spirit-throne on high
Is greater than the light of yonder golden sun.
If He but hear thy beauteous voice in mercy raised,
And see the glistening tear for me in anguish wrung
From heart of innocence that beats confidently,
Perchance on me forgiving mercy will descend,
And, in His pity, loving eyes may rest on me,
By many fevers wasted and the grief that burns:
In condescension maybe He will lift from me
This dreadful woe that bears me down and ever down,

OPHIEL

With leaden sable wings, to unresponsive earth,
So cold and pitiless. O pray for me to Him,
That I may be released from woeful bitterness
And those who ever seek my soul's unending death!"

"My dearest father, stay thy bitter tears awhile.
This very fading night in strange and wondrous
dream

I saw my mother. Silently she came and stood
Within the doorway of my little white hung tent.
I thought she drew aside the curtain noiselessly,—
Whereupon a light more radiant than the noonday
sun

Descended bright, and I was blinded for awhile.
My mother's voice, commanding, bade me raise my
eyes;

And looking far, I saw the boundless, eastern sea
In silvery radiance of the crescent moon above,
In beauty flowing wide. Upon its bosom lay
A strange unearthly ship that seemed a mighty swan
With folded wings beneath a starry azure sky.
Above it gleaming shone a wondrous lady bright,
Whose robes were whiter than the orange bloom in
Spring;

Her snowy hands extended far, in loveliness;
Her peaceful, holy smile was brighter than the dawn,
And she was crowned with silver gleaming moon and
stars.

"And as I looked, she turned and smiled on me in
love,

And for awhile I lost the vision in her smile;
Again it came, but then in darkness only lay.
I saw a white, wave-beaten strand in loneliness,
Where weirdly stood, black-robed and tall, a holy
man,

OPHIEL

Who, gazing out to sea, saw, lit by silvery moon,
The wondrous barque of man ascending to the stars.
To desolate and lonely wilderness he turned
A face as white as lily bloom in summertime,—
But not alone; there seemed a form mysterious,
Composed of sombre night, which followed in his
steps;
Of which he seemed aware, for oft a golden cross
He lifted to his lips, which seemed to move with
words.
Steadfastly to the west he bent his hastening steps
And vanished where the palm leaves border ocean's
shore.

“ Then soft I heard my mother's voice commanding,
low,
As wind in stately murmuring pine, pronounce these
words:
' Give welcome to a messenger of Spirit Great;
An audience lend to one by Queen of Heaven sent.'
Then I awoke. These words were sounding in my ears
While unto thee, my father, fever spent, I hastened.
But see across the waters blue and rippling how
The golden clouds are white and sun-emblazoned all,
How in his majesty the god of day appears!
O Great and Holy One,—whose mighty hand con-
trols
The splendid sun, the earth, the stars that lately
shone,
The crescent moon whose silvery light revealed to me
The wondrous vision of a Lady crowned with stars,—
Look down with pitying eye on these thy children far,
Who cry to Thee for aid, in their affliction deep,—
Let mercy's light on us descending be as great
As all our hope and trust in Thee, most mighty God! ”

III

On either hand the forest stretched of stately pine,
Of tall palm tree and many long and clinging vines;
The way led through an open field of golden flowers,
Where brightly plumaged birds flew near in song to
greet

A stranger darkly robed who came through wilder-
ness.

But one, grey-hued, surpassed them all, and seemed
to change

Their feeble notes to one delirious song of joy.

"Now God be praised for such a beauteous para-
dise,"

And, in His name, Sebastian blessed the lovely scene,
And held aloft a crucifix of pearl and gold,

Which brightly gleamed. It was the one that long
ago

His mother gave to him, when tears refused to cease
When from his home departing,—cherished treasure
long

Upon the wall of cottage humble had it hung
Through all his childhood, and would guard him
until death.

In all the morning, far, through strange, majestic
wood,

He, wandering, saw no sign of man except the fear
Of wildwood animals, which fled before his steps.

Now wearily down amongst the flowers he sank to
rest,

OPHIEL

And leaning on the base of tall and stately pine,
Amidst the brown and golden colors of the wood,
Above the blackness of his priestly folded robe,
In sorrow shone his dark and blue appealing eyes
And lovely face, as white as purest lily bloom
Save for the slightest tint of red on either cheek.
With care, and down upon a bed of golden flowers,
He laid the treasured crucifix of pearl, and looked
With holy face and clasped hands up to the skies,
Where great white clouds that seemed dim mountains
ever changed,
And in magnificence, retaining all their calm,
Moved slowly in the Autumn sky as if to flee
Some strange and far invisible portent of ill.

In stealth, from where the palms were growing thick,
advanced
An Indian warrior,—Winnemoca, young and brave.
His lithe strong limbs were of dull hue like burnished
gold,
Unclothed save for a broad and crimson girdle wound
About the center of his perfect youthful form.
Upon his arm a bow in curious fashion swung,
And crimson arrowpoints upon his girdle hung.
Three scarlet feathers upright in his flowing hair
Were ornaments to head and princely countenance.
Advancing silently, he pressed down the flowers
As noiselessly as shadows creep upon the light.
Ere long, Sebastian smote his breast in fervent
prayer,
When, swift as startled deer, the youth commenced
to flee,
Then paused, awhile his courage gaining to advance.
At last he touched the stately pine and trembling
stood

OPHIEL

In silent wonder by the golden crucifix:
Then forth, within the startled vision of the other
He stepped, with murmuring sound like that of forest
stream,

Which chokes at pleasant turn by many bending
reeds.

On him Sebastian smiled and stretched inviting hand;
Then softly spoke to him, who, trembling and
amazed,

Bowed low amongst the flowers, as strange and wild
as he.

In love the good one blessed his trembling suppliant,
Then gently bade him rise, and strove his fear to
stay.

As Winnemoca in his dreams had ne'er beheld
So fair a one, and deeming him inhabitant
Of far off azure sky, come down to visit men,
And fearing that he might in some strange manner
flee,

He caught the chain that hung down o'er his sombre
robe

And passed through brown and stained fingers one by
one

The little beads which hung upon a circling chain
Until he reached the end where lay in shadow dim
A cross as black as robe of him who stood and smiled.

Awhile he gazed in adoration of the wild
Upon the little figure, representing pain,
Unknown to him, and suffering inexpressible.
In childish fear the youth upraised inquiring eyes
To him who stood observing with a quiet air,
Who in the other's eyes the question gently read
Of why the crucifix and such in emblem made,
And lifted solemn hand toward the smiling sky.

OPHEL

But Winnemoca, fearing lest his visitor
Should rise, returning to celestial realms above,
Secured the sacramental chain encircling him,
And loosed it not for gentle hand or voice nor smile
Persuasive, but, as if in fear of punishment,
He pointed to the downward path that led away
From flower field to forest dark and terrible.
Sebastian lifted from the earth his crucifix,
And on the stalwart shoulders of the other laid
His holy burden brought from o'er the eastern sea.

Together thus they journeyed on, the savage youth
O'erjoyed, anticipating soon to greet his tribe,
The chieftain and his daughter, o'er the province
queen,

In strange barbaric manner at his captive smiled,
Believing him an angel from the azure sky,
And uttering tender cries in exultation weird.
Sebastian, comprehending not the language wild,
Grew peaceful and contented, for he gladly knew
That in the hands of Love he was a prisoner.
'Twas thus at eventide they came through gloomy
shade

Of dark sequestered forest to an open place
Where rested peacefully a little Indian town
Beside a rippling lake that far extending lay
Beneath the fading sun, on western horizon,
Which glowed in flaming awe upon a prominence
Of sombre scarlet cloud in color deep arrayed,
Which seemed to darkly stain the Autumn sky with
blood.

Awhile they paused to look upon the scarlet scene,
As darkly glowed the sun through great majestic
pines,

OPHEL

As sentinels arrayed behind the distant tents,
Which rose in circling lines around a central one,
Which proudly stood at base of overshadowing tree.
As mountains in the distance, clouds of dusky red,
Threw o'er the mournful scene a weird, unholy light,
And red the waters of the lake Oconee glowed,
Until it seemed a scarlet sea of smouldering fire
Wherein uncanny gnomes of underworld held forth
In mystery their rites of punishment and dread.
Ascending slowly, smoke of early kindled fires
Reflected in deep color woe of sunset sky,
While peacefully, within their habitations low,
Each family congregated at the close of day,
Partaking of their food and night's refreshing sleep.

Advancing then, they paused and listened by the
door

Of central wigwam, wherein, lying fever spent,
The chieftain of the flock committed to his care
In gloom and sorrow mingled held his trembling
sway;

And entering softly found him from a slumber waked,
Sore troubled and distressed at frightful feverish
dream.

From bending o'er her father, Tuscawill rose,
And, watchful ever, passing fair to look upon,
In questioning her eyes were bent upon the youth
And on his captive, pale, white, unfamiliar one;
Then, slowly recognized him as the stranger bright
Beheld in clear-remembered vision of the morn.
A joyful cry escaped the chieftain's trembling lips,
Who, turning to his daughter, wonderingly proclaimed
The swift fulfillment of her strange, prophetic dream
In words that softly fell in music weird and sweet:

OPHIEL

"As welcome as the flowers of Spring to desert earth

Art thou, fair visitor from unknown regions high.
Turn beauteous eyes on me again, for now it seems
As though from Paradise a ray escaped and gleams
As splendor glorious of early morning ray
Upon a lone and swiftly fading cloud of night.
From regions far beyond the blue ethereal sky,
Welcome,—thy coming by a messenger foretold.
Perchance thou hast a remedy, O stranger bright,
For that dark woe which dwells within my aching heart,

Consuming all my life as dreadful leprosy.
If thou canst stay its might, all that I have is thine
In compensation for so great a benefit.
Now look upon me with those pitying eyes again;
They seem an angel's in my dreams of long ago
When I, a little child in innocence, was led
Through many wildwood paths where fragrant flowers grew.

"Prepare reception great, befitting such a guest;
Go, bid the mighty warriors come in regal state,
Before their chieftain here to welcome stranger fair.
Command them to adorn with robe and color bright,
For in thanksgiving shall this joyful night be spent,
Now has a messenger come down from Spirit High
To guide us home to land that's incomparable,
Where dwell the beautiful beyond the earth's dark sky,
Beyond the suffering of this life mysterious."
Departing at his bidding, Winnemoca left
The low-hung tent the while with many glances back
Of love and admiration for the sombre one,—

OPHIEL

While Tuscawilla, lovely daughter of the chief,
Was proudly standing by her father's lowly bed,
And with expression downcast bent, as if to shield
The wasted one who lay before her from all harm.

Sebastian saw them moving gracefully and heard
Their gentle words; but, comprehending not, he knew
His coming was with peace; so with uplifted heart
He rendered grateful, silent thanks to God in
Heaven;

Then, turning, saw the chieftain's aged eyes on him
Were fixed, mysterious, and smiling, as the child
Who, wondering, some object of delight beholds,
But dimly seen and strange, yet pleasing to the
sight.

Arising then, the old man beckoned earnestly,
To a seat on lowly hide-strewn couch of stone and
fur,

And tenderly Sebastian raised his wasted form,
Supporting it with little cushions strangely formed,
And dyed in curious and in varied coloring;
Then by his side sat down, repeating o'er and o'er
The simple words, by gesture illustrated much,
That he might understand the language of the other.

In darkness standing, Tuscawilla, with content,
So quietly watched them that her presence in the
shade

Was not remarked by those who in the fading light
Held pleasing conversation, partly understood.

In prayer inaudible her heart went up to God:

"From out the depths we lately cried to Thee, O
Lord,

And mercifully hast thou hearkened to our plea;
No more in darkness and in death's oppressive shade

OPHIEL

Our wandering be, but life's transcendent light shall
fall.

O let Thy glorious face from us no more be turned,
Give us Thy grace our mournful hearts to purify;
By prayer of yonder Queen of Heaven, glorious,
In dream of splendor seen, and crowned with flaming
stars,

Let mercy on us evermore descending be
As great as hope and love of those who cry from
earth

Unto Thy majesty unspeakable on high."

Returning, Winnemoca hastened joyfully,
And in his footsteps came a mute and solemn throng,
Who, entering, one by one, were warriors of the tribe.
With strange barbaric, hasty, springing step they
came

And bowed before their chieftain deferentially,
In rustic awe beholding stranger wonderful,
With white extended hands, who blessed each kneeling
form,

And called from Heaven down on them the grace of
God.

They formed a semi-circle round the two who ruled
In different manner o'er the earth mysterious;
They placed a calumet within Sebastian's hand,
New lighted and containing fragrant, powdered herb.
And in a solemn silence smoked the pipe of peace,
Until the night had fallen darkly o'er the lake;
While in the distance, gleaming by the tented door,
Glowed early kindled fire and red, descending moon,
Which half revealed the forms of those who waited
there.

Awhile beside her father Tuscawillia stood

OPHIEL

In shadows deepening, the scene of peace beheld;
Then silently within the coming night withdrew,
The joyful news to tell to old, belovéd one,—
Olate, foster mother, faithful, true and tried,
Who dwelt in gloomy tent beside an awful wood,
Where sounds arose and ghostly phantoms roamed at
night.

Within the light of flickering fire she found her, and,
In tones melodious, the praises pouréd forth
Of stranger fair and holy from the skies come down.
Olate, listening darkly, called to jealous mind,
Through many an evil year, the ancient prophecy
Foretelling darkly subjugation of her race
By men of paler countenance from eastern skies
Who would her people drive in battles to the west;
And, frowning more, she wove, as sombre mantle grew
By dusky hands, her dreadful dark and evil thoughts.

IV

The time as swiftly fleeting shadow hastened by.
The hunter's moon, which shone in scarlet crescent
form

When first Sebastian came, had grown continually
Each passing day, until in splendor glorious
It rose a flaming sign of woe in evening sky.
Then all the little children crept in terror forth
From curtained doorway at their mothers' wailing
cries,

And stared in wonder to the east, while warriors
stood

Apart and told of strange and direful things to pass.
In haste to Little Father, as they called him, then
Unto Sebastian ran, where he in fervent prayer
Before an altar knelt, of stone, and rudely made.
Who at their troubled cries, excited gestures wild,
Arose and looked toward the east; and, as he stood,
The fiery moon, ascending, lost its dreadful hue,
And paler grew and smaller in the Autumn sky.

Returning to their wigwams in thanksgiving deep,
The Indians' confidence more in Sebastian grew,
And their afflicted chieftain, hearing silently,
The wondrous story told to him,—Obedience
Was rendered by the moon to holy visitor —
Divined the time propitious, guided by the stars,
To assemble in a council solemn all his tribe
With holy priest, the way and manner to devise

OPHIEL

The workmanship required to build a temple high,
Wherein to worship God with action suitable.
By his daughter's willing hands the summons were
prepared;

In haste, with joy she bound the arrows dark and red
In tiny folds of panther's streaked and spotted hide,
And sent them forth by Winnemoca, gladly borne,
Who at her bidding paused not in forests wild,
But hastened on delivering his messages
To many warriors with a ceremonious hand.

With haste, but in exquisite rustic beauty soon,
A little church of God was raised in wilderness;
By sturdy hands were hewn the forest timbers high,
And placed by skilful hand to form an archéd dome;
An open doorway in the eastern wall was formed,
And near the tall, majestic pine, which stood as tower,
O'erlooking palm grove and the tranquil azure sea,
While at the west the stones were heaped in even
lines,

To form an altar, stately, rude, and incomplete;
In northern wall was made a narrow window high
That looked to wide, unfrequented and gloomy wood.
Upon the earthen floor, by many children trod,
The snowy shells were brought from distant sombre
strand

And strewn in form of holy cross, which was o'erlaid
With sparkling sands transported from the eastern
shore,
Which lay beyond the sunny lake of Oconee.

All was completed when the bright and golden moon
Of falling leaves and wailing wind had waxéd large.
Sebastian told of Little Child of Bethlehem,
So innocent and pure, who long ago was born

OPHIEL

In stable lowly, of Virgin, immaculate,
And bade them all prepare to commem'rate the birth
Of God, in love and mercy from His throne on high
Descending to redeem His creatures of the earth.
In eagerness were searched the forests for their green,
And palms were brought and on the altar placed with
care,

Where shone the Holy One, surrounded by the light
Of many burning tapers, lit by hands devout;
Where little children came and knelt upon the sands,
With tiny, clasped hands and dark uplifted eyes,
Repeating o'er the supplications taught to them,
With many a repetition, soft and lovingly:
And o'er the changing scene of worshippers within,
Of holy reverence and subdued joy without,
Lay, inexpressibly, a radiance of peace.

Reclining peacefully beneath the ancient pine,
The preparation watching, Miccanope saw
The smile of joy his daughter gave in passing by.
In earthen vase she bore the fragrant lilies white,
Obtained from sunny lake, in little swift canoe.
Within the distance plaintively he heard the song
Of Winnemoca; saw him resting on the wave
That slowly rippled, in the trembling, red canoe,
Which darkly gleamed in light of far-off winter sun.
In sadness down the youth on his reflection gazed,
Which shone inconstant, weird in silent watery deep;
About his shoulders strong a golden mantle hung,
And on his princely head a wreath of holly lay,
Whose crimson berries formed a martyr's future
crown.

He slowly waved a hand, a dusky unclothed arm,
Encircled by a golden bracelet quaintly wrought,
Across the calm but rippling surface of the lake,

OPHIEL

In weird accompaniment to strange and mournful song:

“What hidest thou, unfathomed depths of blue,
Unanswering chilly wave, reflecting but the hue
Of endless sky above? In vain I seek the days
Of rapturous summertime, when all the forest ways
Were strewn with golden flowers and the fleeting
hours,
Like shining arrows sped into a forest maze.

My Tuscawilla, little one, I wait for thee,
Here, on the bosom of thy fairest Oconee,
Which lies so tranquilly, and, moaning for its queen,
Is glowing sombrely in sunlight's wintry sheen;
My heart imploreth thee again to drift with me
In little red canoe among the lilies green.

No more my voice is heard, no more its pleading falls
On lover's willing ear. The oriole that calls
The note she fondly knew is heard no more, no more.
In yonder holy hall I see a beauteous throne
And one upon the floor who bendeth to adore
The Sacred Presence there; and I am left alone.”

V

That night Sebastian came and knelt, his heart with
joy

O'ercome, alone within the church erected new.
The golden winter moon shone down from starry
sky

And lit, through spacious door, Sebastian's kneeling
form

While he, in contemplation sweet, reviewed the days
Transpiring since his steps had trod the wilderness.
With difficulty he had learned the Indians' tongue,
And they had listened eagerly to words of love;
To obey his least command they hesitated not;
And in the morn they were expected to receive
The holy sacrament which giveth life to man,
To strengthen them in battles for their God above.
Not all, for one, a woman aged and terrible,—
Olate, foster parent to the sachem's child,
With penetrating eye, had coldly turned aside
And, mocking, laughed in scorn when those who
plead with her

Alleged condition happier than gloomy life.

Above the dim and stately throne Sebastian hung
His golden, shining crucifix; adjacent stood
The holy vessels of the altar gleaming bright.

"O gracious God, how can I thank Thee for Thy
love,

Extended down to these Thy people newly found,
For Thou hast brought us forth from all eternity,

OPHIEL

Redeeming us with precious blood, and laying down
Thy life, and still Thy loving favors all endure.
O what return I make for all Thy benefits!
Here is my life, my all, given anew for Thee!"
And, falling prostrate on the ground, Sebastian lay
In loving adoration, thankful and profound.
Above, in moonlit window, evil angel form,
In scarlet splendor, deeply contemplated him,
The lowly worshipper, with strange indifference:

For oft in hours of the dreary night and long
Had Ophiel into his tent as robber come,
And near the sleeping form on couch of stone and
fur,

Despite the cry of little angel guardian;
And brought an evil dream that, ending dark,
Had left the dreamer sad and fearfully cast down.
When once the guardian innocent in fear drew back
Dark Ophiel lay down upon the wintry couch
And twined about the sleeping one his sinuous arm,
Temptations sweet proposing to his troubled ear,
With rapturous tenderness his breath on snowy brow,
As flame destructive from the very mouth of Hell.
"Sebastian!" the little guardian angel cried,
"Awake!" and he, half waking, felt the dreadful
weight

Of evil at his heart, and made the holy sign
Of cross invincible, and at the murmured sound
Of one brief holy word, from troubled heart and
lips,
Ophiel arose and fled, that night to return no more.

This woeful night to Hades Ophiel had sped
In hatred, fear, o'er dreary desert ways that lead
To portal strong and hideous in smouldering light.

OPHIEL

When to the council chamber dark and lone he came,
Upon him Satan frowned, demanding, terribly,
His full account, and when before him it was spread,
He raved in wildest frenzy of demoniac:

“How negligent has been thy service, traitor, slave;
For here I see no mortal soul set down for Hell,
And him thou wast dispatched to overthrow,—in
peace!

Unfaithful knave, of vile neglect thou guilty art.
Ho! Slaves, come bear me to the land presided o'er
By this accursed, and we shall drag unhindered now
The race allured from me, back to allegiance,
And bind with strong and burning chain the feeble
will;

And thou, O trusted one, shall rue thy negligence
In darkest pit of punishment when I return.”

VI

Beneath a gnarled oak, black, bowed, and weather
rent,

Upon whose ancient and decaying branches hung
In tendrils gray the Spanish moss, Olate stood
In black and frowning with malignity of death
Upon the gentle radiance of the early morn.

Her dusky face and darker eyes were filled with
fear,

And oft she muttered low, then shrieked in frenzy
loud

And held aloft unfolding fingers of a hand,
Which strove in vain to clutch the hazy, dancing
light

That sifted through the silent branches overhead.
Behind her lay the marshy wood, and overgrown
By many tangled vines and jungle grasses tall,
While in the distance higher, where the village stood,
Composed of solemn tent and peaceful holy church,
A dreamy morning mist had risen o'er the gloom
And through the early light in gladness streaméd
down.

Afar, and blue, the tranquil glimmer of the lake
Could scarcely be discerned for many forest trees
And broken grasses of the marsh, and mosses low.
In voice sepulchral, "Woe am I!" Olate cried,
In hoarseness scarcely human, sounding by the
marsh:

OPHIEL

"The fools!—they all have listened to the witching voice

Of this persuasive blue-eyed stranger white and frail,
But I to his deceits remain superior.

He thinks, a charlatan, my kinsmen to befool;
But soon with him will vanish this devotion pale.

With greater zeal to bloody dance and sacrifice
Will they return. O then with olden revelry,
The darksome forest ways deserted now will sound,
When here, within accustomed place, the shrieking voice

Uplifts again its cry to angry demon god,
And crimson flows avenging blood from deadly wound.

"Returning soon to brief, relinquished customs,
they

Will cast aside the holy spell that binds them now,
For what has this intruding one to give for all

That he has taken from us? — Not eternal life,
For that delusion rose from out the heart of man
And finds no principal in things material.

The God who made the heavens and the earth so dark,

O where is He, the mighty one who ruleth all,
Who gave the feeble eye that never Him beheld?

And if there be a God beyond the heavens blue,
Beyond the demon god, why does He not appear,
Not stand as if afraid in some deserted place?

Ah no, there is no God, for of my beauty dark
He would have been enamoured, to my tent come down!

In vain their pleading with me to believe and bow;
In their devotion but poor childishness I see.

O give to me the blood of human sacrifice,—

OPHIEL

The god whom I have served and serveth until death."

Then, with a dreadful cry, she moaned in frenzy low,
As brighter shone the sun through misty morning cloud.

Afar the sound of Indian voices came in praise:
"Hosanna! Hosanna! the highest to our King;
To Thee in adoration gratefully we bring
Our hearts, in love, and all we have this Christmas day.

O little One, look down and be our light and way."
The voices nearer came; Olate, now in fear,
Drew back as shadows fly from sunlight hastily,
For in the distance a procession slowly came.
The smallest children first were holding tapers bright

That lit with holy light the shadowed forest aisle;
Then other children, larger, robed in white, advanced

Within Olate's view as, crouching low, she lay
Enveloped in the gnarled shadows of the oak
And muttered curses dread and maledictions low.

Then maidens beautiful and youths with clasped hands,

With eyes uplifted to the smiling, dreamy sky,
In dim and mystical procession came to view;
And warriors for their chieftain who had battles won,

Together with their gentle, meek, and humble wives,
Advanced beneath the canopy of forest gloom
Before their aged ruler, Miccanope, who was
Supported by his gentle daughter's golden arm,

OPHIEL

And Winnemoca, tall and strong and beautiful.
Sebastian came the last with white, upraiséd hands,
Surrounded by the children bearing incense sweet,
And many golden torches leaping in the air.
With slow and solemn step they came in holy song
To purify the place of human sacrifice.
At length a pause was made where rose the scarlet
stone

Beside the marsh and gnarléd tree, where close upon
The shadowed earth Olate lay in writhing fear.

When all the broken stone and places round about
Were purified with water and the censer's flame,
And mystic words pronounced to drive away all ill,
The dim procession moved, returning joyfully
Through brighter forest way into the holy church,
In silence leaving bloody place of sacrifice.
Olate viewed in consternation, shuddering,
The holy act, and when afar the mystic light
Had vanished in the doorway of the little church,
She rose and shrieked for dreadful vengeance to the
air:

Her unbound hair was wildly clutched by frenzied
hands,

In fear she gnashed her yellow and decaying teeth;
And in her dark and wrinkled countenance portrayed
The thoughts that tear the hearts of demons in de-
spair,

As, shrieking wildly, through the forest way she fled.

VII

"O glorious King of Heaven to the earth come
down,

This day my failing eyes have seen Thy majesty
Unspeakable, in lovingkindness lowly veiled;
Unto the long desired celestial hunting ground
May I depart in peace from thee, my little one.
My daughter cease thy weeping, if it be for me;
For never since the world began, it seems, has joy
So thrilled my heart, transforming earth's dark way
to Heaven.

Is this the very sombre-covered bed where pain
Has racked so many times this feeble, aged frame?
Thou art the same, my faithful, loving child, I
know;

Thy face is fairer for the tears now gleaming there.
Is yonder smiling lake the very same that greets
In gloom my dim, half-seeing eyes at early morn?
O never did it seem so still and beautiful,
As though upon its tranquil surface angels bright
Ascended to the shores of gleaming paradise!

"Thou canst not know, my little one, how all the
years

Of woe, and filled with bitter strife, the weight of
sin

And grief, a heavy load, have pressed me down to
death.

In darkest hours of the night I heard the cry,
The moans unearthly low, of warriors done to death

OPHIEL

In many battles; saw their blood-stained ghostly
hands

Arise in fearful night to drive away all rest;
And also came the wailing piteous of those
Bereaved by war's dread holocaust around them
flung.

They cried to me with hollow voices dread and low
And ever strove my wandering mind to overthrow;
But now the strong and hideous chain of black de-
spair

Is struck from withered wrist and all the blood is
gone,

So that my hands are white as newly fallen snow;
And from my dark and bitter life the clouds of
night

Have rose and left a peaceful, calm and shining
hour.

"For I have passed into the garden of the King,
And all the years since early childhood hours seem
But frightful vanished dreams, remembered far and
dim;

Their terrors are no more, for I am loosed from sin
By wondrous holy sacrament, from all the woe
Of misspent days and crimes too horrible to tell.

I am a little child again, refined and pure,
And thou, my gentle, loving daughter bending down
O'er me in tenderness, art beautiful and fair.

How can I speak the joy, the wondrous blessing tell,
Which came to me this morn in yonder holy church?

For words can ne'er portray the glories of the King
Whose sacred holy presence dwells imprisoned there;
The God of earth and highest Heaven to man come
down

And in his midst to dwell — I could not understand

OPHIEL

Had I not felt it in this feeble heart, by love
And by the angels' hands prepared to meet its God."

The shadows of the winter evening slowly waned,
And with the fading light the newly shriven soul
Of Miccanope, old and fever wasted, rose
From earthly habitation, borne by angel hands
Afar across the tranquil willow-bordered lake,
Upward, beyond the golden gleaming evening star.
Upon the wasted earthly form a little hand
With gentlest touch was laid, and tearfully a voice
Murmured, "My father, art thou gone without a
word

Of parting to thy little one in darkness here?"
His heart, it beat no more. His feeble hands were
cold.

A holy calm o'erspread his furrowed brow. His
eyes

Were closed by unseen angel hands, and all was rest,
Save one black-robed and sobbing form that knelt
in woe,

And crying piteously, but not in vain, to Him
Who only knows the secret of the comforter.

At morn before the dawning ray a mournful train,
By torches lit and far off cold and morning star,
Wound in and out the forest ways to silent tomb,
Which rested on a mound, o'erhung by mournful
tree.

To rest beneath the sands the warrior was lain,
As voice of holy priest arose in solemn prayer
O'er silence of the earth which lay in mystic sleep:
Poor little creatures, dust to dust — O what are we
But changing dust whereon is writ the frightful woe
Of life, a time as fleeting as the shades of night!

OPHIEL

And when the end is come, what recompense the
store

Of earthly wealth, acquired by crime or otherwise?—
For all things darkly flee away at death's approach,
In judgment leaving us to stand before our God
Who gave us life that we might gain a higher goal.

VIII

In coldness down upon the wind-swept wintry earth
Was shining drearily the inconstant moon of woe;
As by the cloudy, shaded, rippling waves of night,
In madness, broken-hearted, Winnemoca roamed,
For bitter grief and wounded love were raging wild
Within his youthful heart, now torn and desolate;
And up and down beside the gleaming tomb of one
Who long ago had stilled his feeble crying strode,—
Beside his mother's silent, unresponsive tomb
He wandered broken-hearted, weeping frenziedly:
"O dearest mother, darling mother, hear my cry!
Unclose unto thy child the moonlit, silent tomb,
And let me rest beside thee in thy lowly bed
Forever, for my grievous burden bears me down!
O, listen to my pleading, hear my piteous cry,
As broken-hearted and forsaken, stormy, torn,
I cry incessantly, and, lying, would be still
Beside thee, silent, dead, forevermore at rest."

The wind with awful sound his only answer was,
As shrieking weirdly o'er the waters deep it went,
"O little Tuscawill, darling one," he moaned,
"Forever and forever from me thou art gone.
No more upon the moonlit, dancing waters shall
We drift before the evening shadows fall in gloom
To gather lilies white the altar to adorn.
My red canoe is broken now and stranded lies;
So is my heart, and all seems drifting to an end,—
For thou wilt smile on me no more in dreary life."

OPHIEL

And will the days when thou wast with me come no more?

And shall I never hear thy laughing voice again?
Nor see the bonny smile that charmed away my woe?
O pale, inconstant moon, why mockest thou my grief?

O night, thy dismal gloom cannot compare with that
Which rends my broken heart in frenzy pitiless.

"She smiles no more, her eyes are fixed on Heaven far;

She listens but to him who came o'er lonely sea,
To pale, angelic stranger, white, mysterious;
And woe that I should bring the one to separate
From me my little, bonny bride forevermore,
Who leaveth me but breaking desolated heart.
Shall I, a warrior brave, give up my chosen one,
And, standing calmly, see her taken to the skies
By stranger delicate, and not so strong as I?
No, no; for yon inconstant, silvery moon shall fall,
And all the stars shall flee to realms of darkest night,

Before my life's one glorious light shall upward fly,
Deserting me to madness such as rends my heart.
O, let the heartless waters ripple over me,
And smile in rapture on the dreary, veiled moon,
While I in deeper darkness lying be at rest!"

With look of agony to coldly gleaming sky,
Unto the dark and mournful lake he turned away,
As one distraught, for rest from earthly sorrow deep;

But coming swiftly from the shadowed tomb below,
Olate clutched with fingers, ghostly pale and long,
The broken girdle of the love-bereaved youth,

OPHIEL

His hasty action stayed, and from destruction saved.
She cried, in deep and hollow voice, echoing, "Live!
For vengeance live, and speed thy feet unto the
north;

For in the distance many miles reflected are
In fiery glow the camps — thy ancient enemy.
This night I have upon the bloody sky discerned
The smoke arising as the serpent's changing coil,
And have intelligence that far beyond the hills
Kanapahate comes to war upon thy race,
Divining that our chieftain lies beneath the sod.

"Unto his hostile camp, and in the darkness, haste,
Before the cold and mocking stars extinguished are;
And when thou art before him brought, in frenzy
tell

Of this pale face, the being strange, mysterious,
Who sways the trusting hearts of all thy foolish kin;
And teaching them to bow before a heap of stone,
Which I have seen upraised from out the common
earth,

He bids them love the One who made the sky and
sea,

In substance of the maize and grapes that purple
grow;.

For have I not in scorn observed the maidens go
To gather in the field this fruit to sacrifice?
He by his incantations ever seeks to gain
O'er us dominion, and the wealth of forest land.
Recallest thou the olden prophecy that such
A race would come with sword to drive us from the
earth,

Abolishing the freedom of the bloody rite?

"Thy god and mine is not a cringing god of peace;

OPHIEL

For human sacrifice and torture of the young
He cries, for battle, murder, crime and sudden death;
And, lo! he cries to thee, before it be too late,
Thy country to avenge. Depart at once, and let
Thy heart be strong. Kanapahate supplicate
To come and take as gift for yearly sacrifice
The stranger pale and all the golden vessels bright
That standeth on the altar of the temple high,
Erected by the hands of fools and simpletons;
For Miccanope's gone, deluded by a spell,
Thy master's dead, and thou the chief from all elect.
Remember, 'tis the only way to gain thy bride,
Thy little one so well beloved. So begone,
And let thy every thought be fixed on ways to gain
Revenge for thy deep wrong that's unendurable."

Distraught by frightful grief, all things before the
youth

Appeared in crimson as a glowing sea of blood;
As in the distance raging waters flowing heard
Olate's strife inspiring voice, discordant, hoarse,
And saw, it seemed, above her gloating, hideous,
A dreadful demon with a scarred and bloated face;
The bat-like wings extended terrorized his heart
As from Olate wicked he departing ran.
She was a frightful thing, with that o'er shading
linked

In deep malignity, and loudly shrieked above
The air a witch's curse and malediction dread,
Against all holy things, and fair, above, below;
She was a fury by the frenzied devils torn,
Who clawed her heart in paroxysms of their hate,
And changed her countenance to hideous, wrinkled
scroll.

OPHIEL

In frenzied haste through forest path, in gloom and
woe,

Ran Winnemoca by the demons dread pursued,
His heart so rent by anguish deep that it arose
And overthrew the power of intelligence
Awhile, and broke with fury chain of anger red,
As blood that flowed in dark, tempestuous despair;
And to his haunted, demon-usurped mind it seemed
As if the Last Day's woeful ending dark had come;
And all his raging thoughts were uncontrolled, but
fixed

On one unfailing aim, inspired by Satan's mind,
As on through thicket dense and darkly covered
marsh

The way led far into the weirdly moonlit night.
O'er all oppressive, dismal silence held a sway,
Unbroken, save where rose the panther's wailing
shriek,

Which seemed to fainter grow at each successive
cry.

At length, within a gloomy, haunted wood
Kanapahate's ghastly presence darkly burned,
Obscuréd by a throng of tall and moaning pines.
In stealth, from shade to shade of dim, unguarded
tree,

The youth in terror crept, until his startled sight
Upon a scene by demon-mind suggested fell.
No cruel torture red of Hades' cauldron deep
Could equal that of captured warrior strongly bound
By thong that severed deep his golden, youthful flesh
To painted stake. Around the scarlet glowing fire
In hideous dance inhuman forms went whirling
round.

The painted warriors dark in widening circles lay,

OPHIEL

Whose evil faces gleamed in dread expectancy
Of satiating, bloody torture soon to come.
As coiled adders lying in a sensuous heap
Their ghastly eyes were gleaming cold and heart-
lessly.

One lay apart, more dark and terrible than all,—
Kanapahate, mighty chieftain and renowned,
The enemy of those who dwell in amity,
Who as a wolf that wanders through the forest lone
Seeketh his prey amongst inhabitants of peace.
In darkness gleamed his eyes that seemed but made
to gloat

O'er bloody, conquered field of mortal pain and woe,
And on his face was writ the loathsomeness of death.
'Twas whispered that at deepest night, when all was
still,

Uncanny creatures rose from marshes low and foul,
Whose faces with a horror frightened those who
saw

Them settle down as ravens round the warrior,
And hold a dialogue, mysterious and dread.
To him ran Winnemoca from the shadows dim
And fell on bended knee in cringing posture low.
So mortals e'er betray when driven by the hand
Of demon in the rage of venomous despair.

Increasing burned the flames of torture high and
high

Around the suffering prisoner, who murmured not,
But turned appealing eyes to star that faintly
gleamed,

In wordless prayer. Excruciating agony
Had wrapped him as a cloud in torture deep and
red.

As brighter glowed the hungry flames, in scorn arose
Kanapahate, wrenching angrily a chain

OPHIEL

Of holy beads whereon a tiny cross of pearl
In silence gleamed and radiant as the light of star
That burned so dimly clear in beauty far away,
From off the girdle of the youth who trembling stood
In fear, and flung it mockingly into the fire,
With curses deep, but in its flight it gently caught
Upon the scorched arm of him who suffered there.
"To fools, and such as yonder burn, let this be
thrown;
But thou shouldst bear the warrior's bow and toma-
hawk
And not these women's foolish baubles, full of fear.
Now let their substance by the willing flames con-
sumed
Uprise exultant over thy renouncement brave;
My arm thy cause shall champion and give to thee
The just reward,—the prominence thou dost de-
serve."

The cruel thongs of prisoner in torture bound
At length by writhing flame were partly loosed, and
he
A scorched arm extended for the holy chain,
And, lifting up the little cross, he gazed in joy
Upon the suffering form of one suspended there:
"O God, this consolation I have not deserved!
In frightful agony I cry to Thee on high.
My prayers heed, and show Thy face divine to me;
Look down in tender mercy on thy tortured child.
Have mercy, O my God, have mercy upon me!
This torture is unending and unbearable!
Accept my pain and woe in reparation deep
For all the wrong against Thee ever I've commit,
And, when this life is ended, let Thy angels bear
My soul to that fair land where tortures are no
more!"

IX

In highest Heaven, by an azure gleaming sea
Supremest throne reflecting radiantly bright,
A calm, delightful shore and fair to look upon
Arose within the peaceful light of mercy's throne;
Where grew majestic trees that blooming ever white
Exalted to the sight their spotless purity;
And amaranthine gardens covered o'er with bowers,
The fragrant flowers falling touched the olive green
Of sweet pastoral hill, which, sloping down to sea
In pleasant manner, kissed the waters flowing there;
And where the merry aspen leaves upon the air
Which blew in early morn in silvery splendor danced,
The sweetest music charmed an angel's listening ear,
Who, far through changing light and screen of
aspen leaves,

In stately avenue of graceful cedars tall,
Discerned a snowy temple standing far above,
In golden glow of God, mysterious, adored.
There gleaming, pearly steps uprose to archéd stair,
And beauteous angels, passing in and out, appeared
As chaste and lovely as magnolia flowers sweet.

In haste, St. Michael, glorious prince of heavenly
hosts,
Appeared upon the peaceful scene, and up the way,
To dim, terrestrial gleaming throne of Paradise,
Advanced in splendor, golden as the morning light.
Within the stately hall were columns numberless
And glowing white that formed majestic corridors

OPHIEL

And stately passageways to radiant lighted court,
To which, through shining aisles and over golden
floor,

The white-robed great archangel movéd silently,
Until at length he paused at entrance of the court,
Around which glowed by two the snowy columns
tall

That carved from pearl were decorated splendidly.
Within the spacious court a crystal fountain white
Was playing in the golden glow which streaméd
down

In mystic holy light from higher court above.
His face so fair was troubled, and his tender eyes
A look of newborn sorrow bore in tearful light;
But in his movements was the confidence of that
Authority supreme all evils to adjust.

Beyond the fountain shone a throne of amethyst,
Which lit by tapers such as burn on altars high
Of earth was full of golden splendor from above.
Upon its azure stair a gentle Lady stood
Who listened to the harps of seraphim below.
Her face was fair and holy as the light of morn
That comes in perfect peace o'er heart of penitent,
Beyond the night of woe, of terror and remorse.
Her long white robe was bound with simple golden
band

As chaste and pure as stars that gleam on holy
night,

And in her lovely hands a rosary of pearls
Was clasped tenderly in prayer of mother love,
Containing tears of mortals shed in grief below.
She smiled as mothers smile upon their little ones
Who feel a parent's shelter kind and loving in
The time of peril dread or when the heart is torn;

OPHIEL

And all who felt the radiance of her holy smile
Bowed low in reverence, seraphic and divine.

In holy peace and calm her dark pure violet eyes
Beheld in joy the portal's gleaming column white
Where glorious the prince of heavenly hosts appeared.

Advancing, now he waved aside the seraphim
And stood before the gentle Queen of Paradise.
With loving genuflection, bowing low, he said:
"My Queen, I bring to thee a message from below,
From that far, dismal land of dark, o'erburdened
earth,

From which the adoration of Sebastian comes,—
And others lately ruled by angel of the night,
Dark Ophiel, who has in Satan's dread employ
Become indifferent, because of love for him
By whose good work strange mortals have been
brought to God.

And Him in simple manner daily glorify
Below. All this is known; but far more serious
The import that brings me here; for rising even
now

The swift destruction dreadful Satan contemplates
Of those who have thy intercession deep implored.

She turning with the seraph movéd silently
Across the heavenly court and snowy marble stair
Into a garden small, where hid by olive trees
A little cottage stood, surrounded by the flowers
That grew at Nazareth so many years ago.
There was the simple door as once it calmly stood
In narrow street that led into the market place,
The little entrance where the Lord of Heaven stood
A pretty child and subject to His mother sweet.

OPHIEL

There in the garden fair the fragrant roses grew
About a rustic arbor rudely formed to shield
A sparkling crystal fountain from the noonday light.
The same sweet roses hung upon a balcony
Above, and grew about a garden seat below;
And over all descending shone a golden light
From unseen court above which gave a perfect joy.

Awhile the Blessed Lady stood in silence deep,
Then to the waiting seraph spoke mysteriously:
"Resist thou not, but with thy legions go at once
And gently bear to me each martyred precious soul
As loosed from bondage by malicious hand of ill,
In time prepared to meet its God omnipotent;
But let no harm befall the sacred, earthly mould
Of that fair Indian maid who daily cries to me:
And if perchance thou comest near dark Ophiel,
Whom I have never seen, but who was beautiful,—
If he is penitent because of havoc wrought
By evil hands, and mourn for children of the soil,
Bid him renounce his master, crying unto God
For mercy; for a broken and a contrite heart
He will not cast aside, despite its bitterness.
Then open thou the way for such as him prepared,
And bid him swiftly enter, casting out all fear."

With one low reverence St. Michael disappeared,
And God's sweet gentle mother rested for awhile
Upon the rustic seat o'ergrown with fragrant
flowers;

When presently upon the marble stair arose
A seraph beautiful with shining harp of gold,
Who sang a hymn of earth. His glorious countenance
Resembled lily, white and chaste and beautiful,

OPHIEL

Which gleams in purple-tinted crimson sunset glow.
Dark, beauteous eyes that burned as pure mysterious
flames

Star-sweet before an altar of the most high God,
Where glorious angels serve in sacrificial rite,
Seraphic eyes, resembling sunset's changing stars,
And crimson tinted lips that veiled as ruby clouds
The realm where snowy flowers bloom in purity
To deck high altars of the lord of paradise;
The eyes whose changing beauty welcomed from
afar

The martyred souls of earth to realm of beauty
bright.

X

Before a quiet altar, burning solemnly,
In gloom arose a scarlet flame mysterious,
As star of old, the faithful guiding to the East,
To where a Sovereign new-born in beauty lay,
Supported in His mother's arms, immaculate.
Sebastian knelt beneath the holy flame which shone
In beauty down upon the altar, now complete,
With palms and winter flowers scarlet glowing
decked;

And ever coldly gleaming on his solemn form
Through high and arched window shone the wintry
moon

O'er all inconstant with a dreary light and dim.
Above the flower decorated altar hung
In golden majesty Sebastian's crucifix,
Reflecting pure and holy light that shone below.
Within the little church was calm and holiness;
Without, the winter wind was howling frightfully,
As many demons raving in the stormy air.

The holy priest upraised his voice in fervent prayer:
"Here have I rested for awhile, O my great God,
In serving Thee, my gracious Saviour, I have done
Thy holy will, I trust, in all, and faithfully.
Thy children now are all converted to Thy love;
This place, which once was dreary wilderness to me,
Now seems a paradise, with Thee in love adored.
I am Thy child, to do Thy will forevermore.
O, let me help Thee bear the burdens heaviest,

OPHEL

Thy painful, secret, darkest sorrows undergo!—
And, trusting not to faint nor fall, with Thee to
guide,
Command of me Thy will and it shall be observed
Unto the best of my ability, if Thou
Be near to lend a helping hand in case I fall.
Belovéd One, the joy of all my heart, my all,—
If I could die for Thee my life would be complete;
To Thee I give my all: do with me as Thou wilt.”

In raptured prayer Sebastian knelt oblivious to
The furious wind that wildly shrieked about the
church.

The sun had, going down into a sea of flame
Within the weirdly shining west, descended late
Through tall majestic trees which dark, as columns
stood,

As though portending dire and terrible event
In bloody consternation o’er the earth to fall;
Yet faintly shone the raging fires enkindled there,
And high in storm-racked sky the coldly gleaming
moon

Shone down on wigwams closed securely for the
night.

No wonted camp-fire burned amid the solemn pines,
Nor dusky forms were moving at the night’s advent,
For every Indian, in sorrow and in gloom,
Was mourning for the buried chieftain, well beloved,
Who never more would lead his soldiers to the war,
Nor gently speak of life and death and holy church.
In gloom and tent the greatest Tuscawill lay
Alone and broken-hearted, mourning for her lord.

A gust of wind in fearful terror, sudden, blew
From out adjacent forest weird and dimly seen;

OPHIEL

As if upon its unseen current darkly borne
Two mortal forms came prowling through the
furious night:

One seemed to hesitate, in piteous agony,
And raised a tearful face toward the stormy sky:
'Twas Winnemoca, wildly terrified and filled
With horror for his evil action, and remorse,
In stealth his dark companion guiding to its prey.
The other's savage features gleamed in fitful light
Of weird and partly hidden ray of ghastly moon,—
Kanapahate, servant of the Evil One.
With dread, contorted face he frowned mockingly
Upon the terror-stricken youth, and laid a hand
As black as hidden shadows of the deepest night
Upon his trembling form, in threatening attitude.
He pulled from sheath of serpent hide a tomahawk,
And muttered low as distant thunders ominous.

At length, as wicked thieves at night, they slowly
paused

Beneath the window rudely made, through which the
moon

Was gleaming down; but cringing, shrank as if from
blow,

At holy sight of white, uplifted countenance.

"Defenceless here thy captive is," one hoarsely cried,
In sobbing voice distraught, and low, which seemed
a tone

Of bitter night's tempestuous and wild despair;

"Advance and bind him, take the golden vessels all;

Depart before the coming of the winter morn,

That none may know the woeful fate that him be-
fell."

In tones so deep and hoarse they seemed the wind's
reply,

OPHIEL

Kanapahate spoke as demon in a rage:
"Thou Fool of Sin, to think that I should be content
With yonder petty gold and puny kneeling one,
For all shall satisfy the spear and tomahawk,
And none shall live but Tuscawilla, at the dawn,
For she so beautiful my slave shall ever be."

With dreadful cry and speechless, Winnemoca leaned
Against the cold and stony, unresponsive wall;
Kanapahate, saw with fiendish smile and slow,
From out his scarlet colored sheath a poisoned dart
Release, and, with an evil, burning eye, upraise
And poise it with a careful aim, in scarréd hand.
For words to cry a warning to the innocent
And unsuspecting one in adoration bent!
The very air so loudly crying seemed to pause
In horror of the darkly contemplated deed;
But, lo! before the venomed instrument had sped
From murderous hand, a frightful spirit form arose
From out the night, protecting arms extending o'er.
Its face was wrung by sufferings dark and terrible,
And in its eyes a look of piteous terror burned;
With ill contending for the mortal one it seemed,
But 'twas too late; the dart had sped, the deed was
done,
And hideously warring elements resumed
The battle diabolic in the shrieking air.

Departing, Winnemoca ran in agony
Bewailing, through the stormy night: "My God,
forgive
What I have done this night, forgive my treacherous
deed,
For I was mad with grief and knew not what I did;
Forgive my ignorance, and look in mercy down,

OPHIEL

In mercy down on me. Have pity, O my God,
Have pity on thy child! Forgive my loathsome
crime!

Thou hearest me not, and I, upon the brink of Hell,
See everlasting fire that rages close at hand,
To torture wicked souls. O, help; for now I fall—
Sweet Mother of my God, thou Lady pure and fair,
In pity help! for never yet have I to thee
Implored in vain! O, save me from a sinful death!
In mercy now I feel protecting light around,
And darkly flee the evil, unseen torturers.
From death deliver me, and I will give my life
To thee forever, only save me from the night."

In gloomy tent where burned a low and flickering
light,

In moaning supplication, Tuscawilla knelt
For one who late had passed the bounds of life and
death.

In snowy robe with girdle bound, she turned her
eyes,

With weeping vigils scarce unbroken, sad and dark,
Upon intruding one, unceremoniously,
Who, entering, wildly flung himself upon the ground
Prostrate, then slowly rose and gasped: "He has
been slain.

O, come and see what I have done! O, traitor's
deed!

Kanapahate's demon hand has struck him down to
death,

By me betrayed into his wicked, bloody hand;
And even now he crouches as a panther wild,
To spring upon its prey. By fire and tomahawk
This night are lost all those who will not turn from
God."

OPHIEL

Amazed and speechless, Tuscawill rose and sped
In darkness, thinking only of the dying one.

With hasty genuflection entering, she saw
The mystic, holy flame yet burning peacefully.
Sebastian lay with loving eyes fixed tenderly
On crucifix above, so calm and beautiful;
No torturing pain his solemn outstretched form had
racked;
But, silently and white, he lay as bruised flower;
And, bending down, the maiden heard him whisper
low:

"My daughter, bring to me the Holy Mystery,
Imprisoned in the altar's tabernacle high.
Misguided demon hands must not defile my God."
With care and tenderly obeyed the virgin maid,
While Winnemoca bowed in agony and fear:
"Forgive me, father, for the evil I have done;
Into the hands of ancient enemy this night
Have I betrayed my countrymen and caused thy
death;
Destruction swift encompasseth thy little flock."

As heavenly music to the dying ear, replied
Sebastian tenderly: "My son, God knows thy
heart,
And I forgive thee if thou'rt truly penitent;"
Then partly rose, the blood descending from his
heart,
Removed from sacred chalice, held by kneeling maid,
The priceless gift of God to undeserving man,
Consuming which he sank upon the altar stair,
By weakness overcome, expiring peacefully.
But O what sounds arose above the howling wind!
What piteous cries ascending cleaved the bitter sky:

OPHIEL

"O God, the foe is come, the wolves are in thy flock!

Now help thy unprotected! Let Thy mercy fall
On those who trust in Thee!" The frantic cries
ascend:

"For, gracious God, in Thee we trusted,—save us
now."

Thus fleeing to the house of God, they wildly came,
And found before the silent, empty altar white
Sebastian lying still and cold, and peaceful quite.

The wild and dreadful wind was shrieking fright-
fully,

As many howling demons in the air that cry
Unsatiated, for the blood of innocents;
But o'er the elements uprose the hideous cry
Of many Indian warriors, seeking for their prey;
And at its sound increasing, Tuscawilla rose,
Upon the altar stair above the silent one,
And stood before the terror-stricken throng with
cry:

"My people, courage! God is guiding with His
hand;

He'll not forsake us now in dire necessity.

Let all before His altar kneel; their wailing cease;
Their souls to Him who gave them life now rec-
ommend;

For God is near. I hear His holy, solemn voice
A welcome bidding to His mansions in the sky.
He early calls you home. Be not afraid to go;
But lift no hand, unarmed and helpless as thou art,
For unavailing would it fall. Rely on God.

"Behold, through yonder doorway flames are leap-
ing red

OPHIEL

And wildly blown tempestuous, fearful winds of night.

Lo, by the enemies our homes in ruin are laid!
Almighty God, protect, avenge the innocent,
And save Thy faithful from the power of the dogs!"
As louder roared the storm, ere long the wooden door,
Unbarred, and held by Winnemoca's youthful arm,
Gave way before the rush of many trampling feet;
But, for a moment, in the way the brave youth stood,
As if to shield with flesh and blood the faithful throng.

His holy face was wondrous, calm and beautiful,
Like those released from chains of hideous punishment.

To death swiftly he fell by bloody tomahawk,
Expiring on the threshold of the little church.
Then cry on cry arose to God from faithful lips,
With curses mingled of the frenzied murderers.

Unseen, above the altar Ophiel had stood
And calmly down upon the scene in sorrow gazed,
As one who sees on mournful Autumn day the leaves
From swaying branches by the heartless wind detached

And down upon the saddened earth in fury cast.
As one by one he marked the faithful swiftly slain,
He saw above the murderers a ghastly throng
Of hovering forms resembling his, that seemed to guide,

With hideous demon hands, the bloody tomahawks.
At last before the altar Tuscawill lay
Unmurdered only of the throng, prostrate and low.
With dreadful face, Kanapahate, foremost, paused
And laid his bloody hands upon her virgin form,

OPHIEL

Who though no murderous hand or cruel stone had
touched
Was lifeless, and in wonder Ophiel had seen
Her soul upborne by angel hands amongst the slain.

But now before him stood the enemy of God,
In scorn, deliberation, Satan pausing there:
"Why art thou here?" he thundered, fierce and
ominous,

"Why dost in battle idly stand and seem to guard
The dwelling-place of Him who authorized my ruin.
No other hand this night opposes me but thine;
Wherefore begone, to darkest suffering place in
Hell,

To burn until this mighty hand shall choose to free."
"Thou, Satan," Ophiel replied disdainfully,
"This night thy cruel hand has slain the only one
Who ever prayed for me on earth, and whom I loved;
Who, through the endless dreary years so filled with
strife,

Since I with thee was cast headlong from Paradise,
Has been the only mortal one who plead with me
From thine allegiance, terrible, to change,
And serve again the One who loved me long ago.

"For me a hope he has advanced like morning star
Which darkly gleams in far off, dread and blood red
sky:

Behold this cross of gold and flee, for God is near,—
Thy work is done, for thee my battles are no more."
At this, with angry cry, the demon shrank and fled
With horde of warriors, mortal and demoniac,
One instant pausing an inconstant flame to light
By dread Kanapahate's hand that, soon increasing
red,

OPHIEL

In swift destruction wrapped with deep and lurid fire
The little holy church by loving hands upreared;
The flaming roof and crumbling walls were one by
one

Cast on the lifeless and the bloody forms below,
Consuming martyred flesh and blood of holy ones
As thirsty rays of noonday sun through golden mist
On radiant blue and smiling tropic lake descend.

In crumbling ruin the holy altar partly fell
And buried with its heaping stones Sebastian's form
Of clay and also Indian maiden's lying near;
But still the golden cross on highest stone stood firm,
Remaining thus for many swiftly passing years,
A gleaming monument to those who earthly lay
In ashes dark beneath, unscattered by the wind.
Consuming, blown, the wild and diabolic flames
Ran up the ancient, tall, majestic tree of pine,
Which, bending low in terror of the frenzied wind,
In human and heartbroken agony had groaned.
Soon branch and heart consumed by red and
ravenous flame
With mighty crash it fell and lay on smouldering
ruin,
Expiring with those mortals where it long had lived.
At dawn, when bloody sun arose o'er smoking scene,
In silence all and chilly atmosphere of death.

XI

" Alone save for the distant tranquil stars above,
And cold white mockery of dark mysterious moon;
Below, the speechless horror of the mortal dead
Yet smouldering in the ruin of Satan's demon horde.
Why do the waters of the lily-bordered lake
Reflect so peacefully the grandeur of the skies
When slowly creeping down to mingle with its flood
A stream of red issues from smouldering pyre above?
Alone—how often have I taunted him who lies
Beneath the heavy fallen stone and ashes here,
With that unwelcome thought in dismal meaning
 clothed,
And watched the mournful shadows fall unbidden on
His white and holy face; then, flee unwillingly,
As swiftly o'er his brow and lips and tender heart
A holy sign was made in trusting confidence;
And murmuring, gently said: 'How can I be alone
When God is ever near to love and bless His child.'

" Alone save for the mournful wind among the trees
That lately blew in storm, but almost silent now!
Is this the place so calm where many mortals dwelt?
Where but this night the dark and cruel fiends below
Unchecked rained their fury on the innocent?
Now all are gone, and I am fallen, desolate,
And seek in vain for those I love among the dead.
O, days forever vanished now, come back again!
Could I but see the fair white face of him I loved
As I saw him smiling sweetly, for me praying

OPHIEL

While I his ruin each fleeting moment strove to gain!
Why do I linger here alone where little ones
Of earth so quietly lived and bravely fought and
died?

Below for me vile Satan's banquet hall prepared
And demons gathered for the feast of torture are
In dread impatience waiting for their victim here.

"How can I serve the one who this destruction
wrought?

Or bow before that dark, unhappy, heartless one
Who tortured down to death the little ones I loved,
But knew it not until they all have gone afar?—
Forever gone to blissful state beyond the skies.
O, once I dwelt in stately halls of purity!

And now to them again my heart is turning strong,
For those were joyous days, when He who made me
smiled,

And I, in radiant glory, dwelt His little child.
Sometimes with him whose earthly form lies still
below

I caught the joyous echo of those mansions fair.
O little one, who pitying loved and prayed for me,
Whose swift and fleeting life I strove in vain to
wreck,

I'll follow thee: O God, Whom I rebelled against,
Ages before the earth was morning star, I come:
Can Thy forgiving mercy fall on such a one?

"I hear from realms below the cries of Satan now,
Tempestuous as storm's hoarse voice on rock-bound
shore.

My God, I fly to Thee; accept my penitence.

Dread Satan's servitude forever I renounce.

Henceforth all Thine to be, such penance to endure

OPHIEL

As will induce Thy clemency to grant release
From this regretted state, too late from which I
wake.

Am I then less than earth-born children who rebel
And through their sufferings are restored to Thee,
forgiven?

Is there no hope for those who burn in deepest Hell,
Who lift their broken cries in agony to Thee,
Enduring through the ages countless punishments
Awaiting those who sin, Thy holy will transgress?
O, let me enter in the way prepared for such as I!
The worst which might befall will be but gain to me,
If at the end I see Thy beauteous face again."

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